

Fact Sheet on Hands as a Vehicle of Contamination

Guam Food CODE Five Food Safety Interventions

Food workers can spread illness in the food service environment when their hands come into contact with food. The Guam Food CODE does not allow bare hand contact with ready-to-eat (RTE) food. The CODE also stresses the importance of handwashing. Gloves and other barriers, in addition to handwashing, reduce the risk of spreading illness.

There are 3 Critical Factors in Reducing Foodborne Illness

- 1. Exclusions/restriction of ill food workers*
- 2. Proper handwashing*
- 3. No bare hand contact with RTE foods*

Each of these factors is inadequate when utilized independently and may not be effective. However, when all three factors are combined and utilized properly, the transmission of fecal-oral pathogens can be controlled.

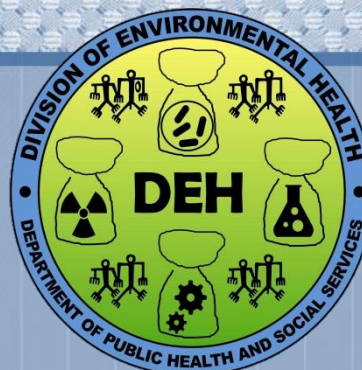


Is Bare Hand Ever Okay?

- Allowable- The Guam Food Code allows bare hand contact with RTE food only when the regulatory authority has granted prior approval for an alternative procedure.
- The alternative procedure must address the management of food employees and related food handling activities to prevent food contamination, including the enforcement of thorough handwashing practices after toilet use.

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What is RTE?

- RTE foods are those foods that do not require any more preparation before they are ready to eat. This includes raw, washed and cut fruits and vegetables, and foods that require no additional cooking such as sandwiches, salads and bread.
- Food workers must use "suitable" utensils when handling ready-to-eat foods.
- Suitable means of handling RTE foods include using: deli tissue, tongs, forks and other serving utensils, spatulas, non-latex single-use gloves.
- Ingredients that are used exclusively in food products which are subsequently fully cooked, such as pizza, are not considered RTE and may be handled with bare hands.
- Bare hand contact with an RTE food, such as sandwiches and salads, can result in contamination of food and contribute to foodborne illness outbreaks.

How to Use Single-Use Gloves

- You should change your gloves at the following times:
 - As soon as they become soiled or torn
 - Before beginning a different task
 - After handling raw meat, fish, or poultry and before handling RTE food
- Follow these instructions for the use of single-use gloves:
 - Always wash hands before putting gloves on and when changing to a new pair of gloves
 - Change disposable gloves between handling raw products and RTE products
 - Do not wash or reuse disposable gloves
 - Discard torn or damaged disposable gloves
 - Cover an infected lesion (cut, burn, or boil) with pus with a waterproof covering and disposable glove
 - Wear disposable gloves over artificial nails, nail polish, or uncleanable orthopedic support devices

Additional Facts

- When hands are heavily contaminated, effective handwashing practices may not be enough to prevent the transmission of transient pathogens from the hands to RTE foods.
- Latex gloves should not be used, since allergens from the gloves may transfer to food and cause an allergic reaction in some individuals
- Single-use gloves used along with handwashing can be an effective barrier to decrease the transfer of microorganisms from the hand to food.
- Gloves are not total barriers to microbial transmission, and will not be an effective barrier alone for food workers without education on proper glove use and handwashing requirements.

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